

SRI TINKADI GOSVAMI

(1906-1984)

Sri Tinkadi Gosvami (Sri Kisori-Kisorananda Baba) was born in 1906 in Manoharapur, a village in district Medinipur of West Bengal. His father was Sri Harimohana Gosvami and mother Srimati Suradhuni Devi. The family had a large number of ancestral disciples.

The number of Harimohana Gosvami's own disciples also was not small. The income from donations made by disciples was plentiful. Therefore Tinkadi Gosvami was brought up in luxury.

He did not have much interest in studies. So his father stopped his education and began to introduce him to his disciples so that he might adopt gurugiri (the profession of guru) as his profession.

He also married him to a girl named Sitalasundari, from whom he had a son. Sri Tinkadi Gosvami lived luxuriously.

He wore spotlessly white clothes made of the finest linen and smoked hukka. The long tube of the hukka with a silver mouth-piece was always attached to his mouth. The smoke of the sweet-scented tobacco, specially got from Visnupur, was seen curling round him.

He went to the homes of the disciples on palanquin. The hukka and a Brahman cook went with him. The cook followed the palanquin on foot. There was, however, a spark of bhakti in his heart, which often disturbed him and made him think of the futility of worldly life.



The spark was smoldering slowly. It developed into flames, when his father died only a year after his marriage. A wave of vairagya shook his entire frame. He said to himself, "I must no more waste my life in the trivialities of life. I must wake up and work for a higher destiny. I must renounce the world and go to Vrndavana. No doubt, after the death of my father, the responsibility of running the family has fallen upon me.

Perhaps I should wait till my son grows up. But who knows, I may not live till then. Death may sweep down upon me any moment and foil all my plans. No, I cannot wait for better times. If, sitting on the bank, I begin to think that I shall bathe, when the waves subside, I shall never be able to bathe, because the waves will never subside. I must jump into the sea right now."

So one day he sneaked out of home without letting anyone know. He went straight to Govardhana and fell at the feet of Siddha Manohara Dasa Baba of Govindakunda. He expressed his resolve to live in Vrndavana and do bhajana under his guidance. Manohara Dasa Baba said, "Gosain! The time has not come for you to live in Vrndavana. You must wait till the time comes. Go back and attend to the affairs of the family."

"But I have not come to go back," said Tinkadi Gosvami. "I have no money for going back."

"You need not bother about that. Your people have already sent a money order for your return passage to one of your relatives in Vrndavana. You go and take the money from him." Tinkadi Gosvami had to obey. He returned home after seeing the temples and other holy places in Vraja. Soon after he returned home his wife died. He was at that time 28 years old. His relations began to insist that he should marry again. To avoid them he went out on long pilgrimage. He visited all the holy places from Badrinarayana in the North to Kanyakumari in the South. In every temple, to which he went, he prayed to the deity to grant him siddha-bhakti and fulfill his desire to live in Vrndavana.

After pilgrimage, instead of returning home, he again went to Manohara Dasa Baba in Govardhana and asked permission to live in Vrndavana. Baba again said, "Gosain! Even now the time has not come for your living in Vrndavana. Go home and marry. You still have much karma to do. When the time comes, Radharani will herself draw you to Vrndavana. You need not worry." He returned home and married Sarasvati Devi, the daughter of Asutosa Hada of a village near Manoharapur. He had two daughters from her. But this did not make any difference to his vairagya. It went on increasing. He hardly lived at home. He travelled from village to village preaching Harinama. In every village he arranged akhanda (non-stop) Harinama Kirtana either at the house of one of his disciples, or at some other place. But he did not live with his disciples.

He built a thatched cottage at some distance from the village. He lived in that cottage and did bhajana from 3 o'clock in the morning till late at night. Only in the evening he came out of the cottage, when he listened to Srimad Bhagavatam or some other Bhakti-sastra read to him by someone and participated in the kirtan in which he also danced at times. While dancing he sometimes shouted so loudly in bhava that it seemed the shout would rend the sky. At this time there was no considerable change in his outward appearance. Instead of fine linen he wore clothes made of coarse cloth and his constant companion was Harinam and the bag of beads for counting Harinam instead of hukka.

Tinkadi Gosvami now shifted to Navadvipa. In Navadvipa there lived Phalahari Baba, who had his asrama on Manipur Ghata. He donated the asrama to Tinkadi Gosvami and went to Vrndavana to pass the rest of his life there in bhajana. Tinkadi Gosvami began to live with family in that asrama.

A Gosvami of Telipada in Nanadvipa had the Sri Vighraha Radha-Madhava, Whom he worshipped. After his death one day the Sri Vighraha said to his wife in a dream, "Give us away to Tinkadi Gosvami." The lady went and told Tinkadi about the dream. Tears began to flow from the eyes of Tinkadi Gosvami to hear what she said and horripilation appeared all over his body. He said. "Ma! I am not eligible for the service of Sr Radha-Madhava. But since They have expressed the desire to receive my service, I shall certainly bring and serve Them as best I can." He brought and re-installed Them in his asrama and renamed Them Radha-Vallabha. Tinkadi Gosvami was now so much absorbed in bhajana that it was not possible for him to live at home with family. His home began to appear to him like a dark well without water and relations like trees devoid of fruits and full of thorns. He began to pass most of his time under trees on the bank of Ganga. Soon his reputation as a saint spread all around Navadvipa and people began to come to him for darsana. It became impossible for him to do bhajana in loneliness anywhere in Navadvipa. He, therefore, began to do bhajana in Balavana, a forest at some distance from Navadvipa. At this time he again became

restless for Vrndavana. It began to appear to him that he had a call from Radharani, which he could not resist. Therefore he rushed to Govardhana and fell at the feet of Manohara Dasa Baba. He said to him with folded hands and tears in his eyes, "Maharaja! Kindly do not turn me away this time. Give me vesa (bhlek) and shelter under your feet."

This time Baba gave him permission to live in Vrndavana but said, "Gosain! How can I give you vesa. You belong to the family of acaryas, with whose help and blessings people cross the ocean of Maya. You do not need vesa." Tinkadi Gosvami then tried to take vesa from some other saint. But no one gave him vesa, because he was an acarya. Therefore, one day he took vesa of a renunciant Babaji by putting on an old kaupina of Baba Manohara Dasa and taking a vow never to return home. He did not need initiation, because he was already initiated by his father. After taking vesa Tinkadi Gosvami began to do bhajana with great austerity. He wore kaupina and uttariya (a sheet of cloth to cover the upper part of body) made of gunny. He did not live long at one place. He sometimes lived in Premasarovara, sometimes in Varsana, Pavanasarovara, Kamyavana, Adibadri, Resauli, Camelivana, Tapovana, Panighata, Akruraghata, or Durvasakunda. Everyday he got up at 1 a.m., took bath and sat down for bhajana. Sometimes if he could not get up until 2 a.m. some spiritual power woke him up. Twice he felt as if Mahaprabhu Himself had awakened him.

Once a Vrajavasi lady came to Baba with her eight year old son, named Mathura Dasa and said, "Baba, I deliver this child to you. Kindly accept him. He will render all kinds of service to you." Baba accepted him. He asked him to go and bathe in Radhakunda. When he had bathed he gave him mantra. The boy did not know the importance of a Guru. He regarded Baba as his Baba (grandfather) and loved and served him accordingly. Baba also loved him, because he was a Vrajavasi. His presence reminded him of Krsna and his lila. He gave him to eat all the good things which people offered him. He was so free with him that he often told him the most secret things of his heart.

Once Tinkadi Gosvami was circumambulating Radhakunda with Mathura Dasa, he proceeded towards the bhajana-kuti of Gopala Bhatta Gosvami, he said to Mathura Dasa, "Mathura, look, I tell you one thing. In Caitanya Caritamṛta what Kaviraja Gosvami has written about Sri Radhakunda is false." "What has Kaviraja Gosvami written Baba?" asked Mathura Dasa. "He has written: sei kunde jei eka bara kare snana tare radha-sama prema Krsna kare dana (anyone, who bathes in Radhakunda but once, is blessed by Krsna with prema like that of Radha.) I have bathed in the kunda so many times. But neither has Krsna given me prema nor darsana. I shall now go to Bengal and preach that no one should go to Radhakunda and no one should believe Krsna, Because what Kaviraja has written about them is false."

"Do not do that Baba, because that will hit us Vrajavasis, who depend on the donations made by the pilgrims."

"Then why don't you pray to Radha-Krsna for me? You are a Vrajavasi. They will grant your prayer."

"Very well Baba. I shall pray."

At that time the Manipuri ladies were doing arati of Giriraja at the spot where Radhakunda and Syamakunda meet. As Baba was proceeding in that direction, he stopped suddenly and said, "Oh! How beautiful! Mathura look, Radha-Krsna sitting on an altar, bedecked with jewels! The sakhis performing arati! Oh! How beautiful the kunda filled with milk and how beautiful it's jeweled ghats! Mathura, hold me or I shall fall." Mathura said, "Oh Baba! They are the Manipuri ladies, doing arati of Giriraja. Where are Radha-Krsna?" But as soon as he held Baba, he saw the kunda filled with milk, though he did not see Radha-Krsna. Mathura told Baba about this when he came to his own. Baba said, "You will see. You will see when the time comes. You do not yet have the eyes to see Rasaraja Krsna and Mahabhavavati Radha." But how is it, one may ask, that Baba got the eyes to see immediately after he had threatened to preach against Krsna? The fact is that this son of Nanda is also too simple. He is scared even when a devotee gives Him a false threat and is compelled to do what he wants.

It is obvious from the above that Tinkadi Gosvami Had attained prema. It was through the eyes of prema that he could have the darsana of

Radha-Krsna with the sakhis. But prema is dynamic. It is never satisfied with itself. The more prema, the more the feeling that one is devoid of prema. Therefore the more the prema, the more the yearning for it. Baba had only had a glimpse of Radha-Krsna. After Their darsana Their separation became unbearable. He wept day and night on account of Their separation. He lost sleep and hunger and life became burdensome to him.

One day, when he was sitting in meditation with his eyes closed his inside and outside seemed to have suddenly brightened with the glow of a transcendental light. As he opened his eyes, he saw that Radharani stood before smiling and shedding round her the light of a thousand moons. She said to him, "You have realized the end you had desired. But you have a lot of work to do. You will come to Me and be always with Me when the time comes." She said this and disappeared (Tinkadi Gosvami had himself disclosed this to Sri Priyacarana Dasa Baba of Govardhana). As soon as She disappeared Tinkadi Gosvami became unconscious. On regaining consciousness he felt his heart and soul and every inch of his body was filled with nectar, which was overflowing through his eyes in the form of tears. After this throughout his life he remained in a state of bhava, which was unearthly and unprecedented.

Once the father of Mathura Das had gone to Bengal, Mathura was with Baba and his mother was alone at home. At about nine in the morning, when Baba was meditating, he

suddenly cried, "Oh! Ma has fallen!" Mathura became anxious about his mother. He gave him a jolt and asked, "What has happened Baba?" Baba was at that time seeing some lila in smarana. His smarana stopped. He felt very bad. But he only said, "Oh! Nothing, nothing." In the evening he called Mathura and said, "Why did you jolt me this morning, when I was having lila-darsana?" Mathura said, "How could I know what you were doing? You said that Ma had fallen. I got anxious about her. So I jolted you."

"Never do that again."

"But why did you say that mother had fallen?"

"I did not mean your mother"

"Then whose mother?"

"You do not know. I saw that Nandalala was going with his friends to pasture cows. Yasoda Ma asked Rohini Ma to give Him some hot milk. Rohini Ma went to bring milk. The boys were restive. They asked her to hurry. In haste, while she was bringing the milk, she fell down. The boys cried, "Oh! Ma has fallen." I also said. "Ma has fallen."

For some time another Vrajavasi, named Ayodhya Dasa had also been living with Baba, and serving him. He had wholly dedicated his life to the service of Baba and served him with all his heart and soul. By serving him day and night, sincerely and selflessly, he had so identified himself with him that he could read his mind. He could know without his telling him what kind of service he needed at a particular time and started making preparations for the same even before he said anything. He also

brought madukari for him. Suddenly he died of cholera. Baba became anxious about his condition after death. He wished that sincere, selfless and dedicated soul as he was, he got his rightful place in the spiritual world. One night, when he was thus worrying about him, he had a nap. In the nap he heard Radharani saying "Why do you worry about him? He has come to Me even before you." No wonder, because Radha-Krsna are pleased more by the service rendered to Their devotee than by service rendered to Them.

Several other devotees came from Bengal after renouncing the world and began to live with Baba and serve him after taking diksa from him. He started going with them from village to village to preach Harinama. In every village he arranged Bhagavata-saptaha (A week-long reading of Srimad Bhagavatam) and samkirtana. His disciples got up at three o'clock in the morning and did bhajana. They also attended the Bhagavata-saptaha and participated in kirtana, while Baba sat throughout the day under some tree in a lonely place and did japa and smarana. After the Bhagavata-saptaha he arranged a feast with the help of the Vrajavasis. The Vrajavasis brought provisions for the feast from their homes. The Vrajavasis and the people, who came to attend the patha [reading of scripture] and kirtana all participated in the feast, while Baba and his disciples ate madukari.

The number of Tinkadi Gosvami's householder and renunciant disciples went on increasing. The renunciant disciples wanted to

live with him. Therefore he built asramas for them in Radhakunda, Tapovana, Govardhana and Vrndavana. The asrama in Vrndavana was built near Kesighata and was named Murarimohana Kunja after the name of the deities installed in it. Once, when Tinkadi Gosvami was living in Tapovana, several rich persons came to him for darsana. The dacoits came to know about this. They thought that the rich men had given him lots of money. Therefore they came to him at twelve o'clock in the night. He remained undisturbed. He gave them asana to sit upon and asked them to eat something. The dacoits were hungry. They agreed to eat. Tinkadi Gosvami asked a disciple to cook for them. While he was cooking Tinkadi Gosvami was chanting aloud Harinama. His loving behavior and Harinama made the dacoits forget the purpose for which they had come. After they had eaten the food cooked for them, they offered one hundred rupees to Tinkadi Gosvami and said, "Baba! We are not good men. The purpose for which we came was also not good. But your company has brought about an unprecedented change in us. You can now live here and do bhajana under our protection. No harm will ever come to you."

Tinkadi Gosvami saw his Ista in every living being. His heart was full of love and respect for all. He could not think of violence against anyone. Therefore even the violent creatures, who came in contact with, became non-violent. Several times, when he did bhajana in some forest, lions and tigers appeared before him, but went away without doing any harm to him. Once

during winter he lived in the forest, called Rantankunda with some disciples. One day while he was sitting in meditation and his body was covered with a shawl, a disciple saw that a poisonous snake had entered the shawl and was staying there. Only its tail was out of the shawl. Tinkadi Gosvami was absorbed in lila-smarana. He was not at all aware of the snake. The disciple was deeply worried to see this. But he did not raise a cry or do anything else to turn it away. After some time the snake crawled away, without doing any harm to Tinkadi Gosvami.

Once some disciples of Tinkadi Gosvami took him to Nilacala. Mathura Dasa went with him. In Nilacala he always thought of Vrndavana. On seeing Cataka Parvata he felt that he saw Govardhana. On seeing the sea he thought he saw the Yamuna and said to Mathura Dasa, "Look Mathura, how Yamuna is in spate." One day some devotees offered him cheese to eat. But he did not eat. When Mathura asked him to eat, he said, "Mathura, I have no appetite. Only a short while ago I took roti in Radhakunda." Mathura said, "Baba! You are lying. You are here in Nilacala. How could you go to Radhakunda to eat roti?"

"No, you ask your mother. She was circum-ambulating Radhakunda. I saw her near Lalitakunda. She was wearing a green sari and carrying milk in a small pot. I said, 'Ma! I am hungry. Give me roti.' She said, 'Come to my home after I have done parikrama.' I went to her home. She gave me a roti and some vegetable. If you think I am lying, you can write her a letter

and inquire." Mathura wrote to his mother. She confirmed all that Tinkadi Gosvami had said. The fact is even if he lived in Nilacala or Navadvipa physically, in his subtle body he lived always in Radhakunda.

Once when Tinkadi Gosvami was living in Vrndavana he again expressed his desire to go to Nilacala. His attendants wrote to his disciple Sushila Bhaumika of Navadvipa and Dilipa Kumara Mitra of Calcutta, asking them to arrange for his visit to Nilacala. After two or three days he dropped the idea of going to Nilacala at the insistence of the devotees of Vrndavana and sent telegrams to the aforementioned disciples asking them not to arrange for his visit to Nilacala. At the same time he started Bhagavata-saptaha in the Radha-Murarimohana Kunja in Vrndavana. Unfortunately the telegrams did not reach Navadvipa and Calcutta in time. Sushila Bhaumika and Dilipa Kumara booked four seats in the plane for going from Delhi to Bhuvanesvara and reached Vrndavana on the third day of the Bhagavata-saptaha. Tinkadi Gosvami did not want to go to Nilacala during the Bhagavata-saptaha. But circumstances compelled him to go. From Bhuvanesvara he went to Nilacala and stayed in Thakura Haridasa Matha. For three months during his stay in the Math, patha, kirtana, and bharidasas (feasts) continued to enliven the environment. After three months devotees came from Navadvipa to take him to Navadvipa and he had to go. The devotees brought him to Navadvipa. But as usual he lived in Navadvipa only in body.

His soul was in Vrndavana. He was always absorbed in Vrndavana-lila that day and night made no difference to him. For him the day was night and night was day. Once, when absorbed in lila he kept on sitting till 12 o'clock at night. A devotee said, "Baba! It is now 12 o'clock. Kindly lie down and sleep." He replied, "Do I ever sleep during the day?"

Perhaps it was not possible for Tinkadi Gosvami now to live out of Vrndavana and he wanted to go there never to return. So one day, when his disciple Vrndavana Dasa was going from Navadvipa to Vrndavana, he said to him, "You go. I shall soon follow."

Since Tinkadi Gosvami desired to go to Vrndavana, Murarimohana, the deity in his asrama in Vrndavana also became restless for his company. Tinkadi Gosvami received a letter from Kisor Das Baba of Kesighata Thaura, in Vrndavana. He wrote, "Baba! I saw in a dream this morning a black boy saying to me 'You people sent Gosain away from here in the midst of Bhagavata-saptaha. Now go and bring him here at once.' I said to the boy, 'Who are you?' He replied, 'I am Murarimohana.' Therefore, Baba you come here at once."

The letter was read to Baba. On hearing the letter he became silent. His eyes closed. Two days later, on Phalgun Krsna Navami of the year 1984, he suddenly shouted, "Jai Nityananda Rama! Jai Nityananda Rama!" and left the body to go and meet Murarimohana in Vrndavana. At that time Mathura Dasa was in Radhakunda. The next morning at 5:00 a.m. he saw Tinkadi

Goswami in a dream. He said to him, "Mathura! Look, I have come to Radhakunda. Let us go bathe." Mathura told his mother about the dream. She said, "Probably Baba has left the body and come to Vrndavana in his siddha-deha." The next day Mathura dasa received a telegram which confirmed what she had said.

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Chapter XXV entitled "Sri Tinkadi Gosvami"*